

Pilot implementation of a formal leadership development strategy within a student chapter of an American pharmacy organisation

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Abstract

Introduction: This report describes the pilot implementation of a formal leadership development strategy for the elected officers within the Midwestern University College of Pharmacy-Glendale Chapter of the American Pharmacists Association Academy of Student Pharmacists (APhA-ASP).

Description: The leadership development strategy consisted of initial meetings with each chapter officer regarding their personal goals and a self-appraisal of their leadership skills, mid-point meetings with each officer regarding their leadership experiences up to that point, and a concluding group meeting with all officers regarding the concept of strengths-based leadership.

Evaluation: Upon completion of their elected terms, each officer was surveyed about their leadership experiences within APhA-ASP. The overall response rate was 95% and each experience was perceived as having some degree of benefit.

Future Plans: These data will be used to improve the development strategy and will serve as a baseline for assessing a subsequent initiative founded upon the concept of emotional intelligence.

Keywords: *APhA-ASP, Leadership Development, Strengths-Based Leadership, Student Organizations, Pharmacy Students*

Introduction

The value of leadership within the pharmacy profession has been well documented (Holdford, 2003; Bond *et al.*, 2004; White, 2005; Zellmer, 2008; Kerr *et al.*, 2009; Sorensen *et al.*, 2009; Christou & Wright, 2011; Janke *et al.*, 2011; Janke *et al.*, 2013; Black *et al.*, 2014; Fierke *et al.*, 2014). Within the United States (US) the importance of developing the leadership skills of pharmacy students is particularly highlighted by the Accreditation Standards and Key Elements for the Professional Program in Pharmacy Leading to the Doctor of Pharmacy Degree (Accreditation Council for Pharmacy Education, 2015) and the Center for the Advancement of Pharmacy Education Educational Outcomes (Center for the Advancement of Pharmacy Education, 2013). While academic settings within the US offer a variety of opportunities to provide leadership training, a standardised approach has yet to be established. Curricular strategies have traditionally focused upon the creation of leadership-based elective courses, but also have an ability to reach broader cohorts of students (Boyle *et al.*, 2004; Janke *et al.*, 2009; Sorensen *et al.*, 2009; Patterson *et al.*, 2013; Sucher *et al.*, 2013). Alternatively, extra-curricular strategies, such as those

employed within student organisations, enable the application of leadership principles in an experiential manner and the mentoring of students in a more longitudinal fashion (Kerr *et al.*, 2009; Chesnut & Tran-Johnson, 2013).

Midwestern University College of Pharmacy-Glendale (MWU-CPG) has traditionally facilitated the leadership development of its students by supporting numerous campus-based chapters of national pharmacy organisations. However, MWU-CPG also offers an accelerated three-year Doctor of Pharmacy curriculum that is implemented year-round through a four-quarter system, which places a greater time limit on the amount of leadership experience students can gain by serving as elected officers within these chapters. In response, the two faculty advisors for MWU-CPG's chapter of the American Pharmacists Association Academy of Student Pharmacists (APhA-ASP) created a formal strategy to facilitate the leadership development of their chapter officers beyond what had been naturally occurring as the officers completed the duties of their elected positions. This report describes the pilot implementation of this strategy with the officers from the 2010 & 2011 graduating classes.

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Description

The formal leadership development strategy created by MWU-CPG’s APhA-ASP faculty advisors consisted of a series of voluntary activities. At the beginning of their elected terms, each chapter officer from either the 2010 or 2011 graduating classes met with both faculty advisors to discuss their personal goals for the term and a self-appraisal of their leadership skills (Center for Coaching & Mentoring, 2014). The objectives for these individual meetings were to initiate the development strategy and to establish a baseline for each chapter officer. At the mid-point of their elected terms, each officer met with both advisors to discuss a reflection upon their leadership experiences up to that point (Table I). The objectives for these individual meetings were to build upon the beginning activities and to prepare each officer for the remainder of their terms. Near the conclusion of their elected terms, all officers met with both advisors to discuss the book titled Strengths Based Leadership (Rath & Conchie, 2008), a composite of the officers’ StrengthsFinder 2.0 Assessment results, and two workplace scenarios that simulated the utilisation of the officers’ identified leadership styles (Table II). The objectives for the group meeting were to wrap-up the development strategy and to facilitate each officer’s transition into their advanced pharmacy practice experiences, especially with regard to applying what they had learned and to continuing their own development. Each of the individual meetings was 30 minutes in length and enabled open in-depth discussion between each chapter officer and both faculty advisors, while the group meeting was one hour in length and enabled a shared discussion amongst all officers and both advisors.

Table I: The reflection questions discussed during the mid-point meetings regarding each officer’s leadership experiences up to that point

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| 1) During your current term, what do you feel is the most important thing you’ve learned (either positive or negative) about your leadership skills? |
| 2) Why do you feel this is the most important thing you’ve learned? |
| 3) How will gaining this knowledge influence the remainder of your current term? |

Evaluation

Upon the conclusion of their elected terms, each chapter officer (n=22) was asked by the faculty advisors to voluntarily complete an anonymous survey via SurveyMonkey.com (SurveyMonkey.com, Inc., Palo Alto, CA, USA). The survey instrument asked the chapter officers to indicate how beneficial each of a variety of APhA-ASP experiences was to their leadership development using a four-point Likert scale. In addition, the officers could indicate if they did not participate within a particular experience. The instrument also

Table II: The workplace scenarios discussed during the concluding meeting about strengths-based leadership

Workplace Scenario #1	Workplace Scenario #2
You have just started your first pharmacist position after graduation. You are assigned as a staff pharmacist to a community pharmacy that is staffed by two other pharmacists and two senior pharmacy technicians. Both technicians have been with the company for at least 10 years and feel very confident in the daily workflow and needs of the site. As a new graduate taking on a leadership role in this pharmacy, what strategy would you take to earn the respect of and provide leadership for these two “followers”?	It is now two years later in the same pharmacy. Your regional manager has recently implemented changes in the workflow at all pharmacy sites. You are willing to support these changes, but the technicians are voicing concern to you that one of your partner pharmacists is strongly against accepting them. This has caused quite a bit of inconsistency for them depending on which pharmacist they are working with on a particular shift. How would you approach your partner pharmacist to facilitate a positive environment during this time of change (neither of you is the pharmacy manager)?

included several open-ended questions that asked the officers to qualitatively indicate what additional experiences were beneficial, which experience was the most beneficial, how the experiences may be improved, and what additional experiences should be added. Completion of the instrument served as informed consent to participate within the evaluation, which was approved by the MWU-Glendale Institutional Review Board.

The overall response rate for the survey was 95% and the collected data were analysed within Microsoft Office Excel 2010, Version 14 (Microsoft, Inc., Redmond, Washington, USA). The survey ratings were analysed using descriptive statistics and summarised in aggregate (Table III). The open-ended responses were first reviewed to identify unique themes and then the number of responses correlating to each theme were tabulated, which enabled the identified themes to be quantitatively ranked relative to the frequency of their correlating responses (Tables IV-VI). The chapter officers indicated that each of the formal activities had some degree of benefit to their leadership development thereby suggesting that the strategy created by the faculty advisors was effectively implemented, which is also supported by the advisors’ own perceptions that the strategy had a positive impact upon the chapter’s overall management. However, despite the entirety of the desired population being represented within this evaluation, the data are still limited to a relatively small and distant cohort of individuals and are based solely upon the officers’ perceptions instead of an actual measurement of their leadership development.

Tables III: The extents to which the chapter officers perceived each of a variety of APhA-ASP experiences as being beneficial to their leadership development (n=21)

Experience	# of Responses				
	Very Beneficial	Beneficial	Somewhat Beneficial	Not Beneficial	N/A*
Completing / discussing the initial leadership skills assessment at the beginning of your term	8	10	2	0	1
Completing / discussing your personal goals at the beginning of your term	13	7	0	1	0
Completing / discussing the mid-term reflection activity	11	9	1	0	0
Completing / discussing the final StrengthsFinder Leadership Assessment	18	2	1	0	0
Completing the duties of your elected position	15	5	1	0	0
Attending any leadership development workshops at the Midyear Regional Meetings and/or Annual Meetings	5	3	3	0	10
Attending the Summer Leadership Institute	3	0	0	0	18
Informal interactions with the chapter advisors	17	3	1	0	0

*Nearly all respondents (95-100%) participated within each experience except for “attending any leadership development workshops at the Midyear Regional Meetings and/or Annual Meetings” (52%) and “attending the Summer Leadership Institute” (14%)

Table IV: The additional APhA-ASP experiences that the chapter officers indicated as being beneficial to their leadership development (n=18)

Identified Theme*	# of Responses†
Working with other chapter officers	7
Leading committees	6

*All of the responses were first reviewed to identify unique themes and then the number of responses correlating to each theme were tabulated

†Several respondents provided multiple responses and/or referred to an experience previously listed

Table V: The APhA-ASP experiences that the chapter officers indicated as being the most beneficial to their leadership development (n=21)

Identified Theme*	# of Responses†
The final StrengthsFinder Leadership Assessment	12
Completing the duties of your elected position	7
Discussing your personal goals at the beginning of your term	5
Informal interactions with the chapter advisors	5
The initial leadership skills assessment	3
The mid-term reflection activity	2
Attending any leadership development workshops at the Midyear Regional Meetings and/or Annual Meetings	2

*All of the responses were first reviewed to identify unique themes and then the number of responses correlating to each theme were tabulated

†Several respondents provided multiple responses

Table VI: The recommendations that the chapter officers provided for improving and/or adding to the leadership development experiences (n=16)*

Identified Theme†	# of Responses‡
Perform the StrengthsFinder Leadership Assessment at the beginning of the elected terms	5
Better promote participation in regional and national leadership development workshops	5
Provide more individualized guidance	3
Share each officer’s goals with the entire executive committee	2
Encourage enrollment in relevant College elective courses	2
Include a leadership section within the chapter’s event reporting form	1
Improve the transition between the outgoing and incoming executive committee members	1
Periodically distribute and present leadership materials and articles	1

*Several respondents did not distinguish between “how the experiences may be improved” and “what additional experiences should be added”, and therefore, the responses to these questions were combined

†All of the responses were first reviewed to identify unique themes and then the number of responses correlating to each theme were tabulated

‡Several respondents provided multiple responses

Future Plans

The data collected during this pilot implementation has been used to improve the faculty advisors’ formal leadership development strategies within MWU-CPG’s chapter of the APhA-ASP and will serve as a baseline for assessing a more current initiative amongst a larger cohort of chapter officers. In particular, the advisors have

been holding a group meeting with all of the officers at the beginning of their elected terms to discuss organisational management and strategic planning with the objectives being to better prepare the officers for their respective duties and to improve their collaboration. In addition, the group meeting regarding the concept of strengths-based leadership has been moved to earlier in the elected terms to provide each officer with an additional opportunity to reflect upon their identified leadership style. To facilitate this reflection, the advisors have been holding additional individual meetings with the objective being to enhance each officer's understanding and on-going development of their leadership style. These changes are also part of a broadening strategy that has been founded upon the concept of emotional intelligence (EI) and will utilise each officer's EI scores in an attempt to correlate their perceptions with the strategy's actual impact upon their behaviours and skills. Our evaluation of this broader strategy will also include an assessment of its scalability to other organisations and a determination of how each activity specifically accelerates leadership development, particularly relative to its applicability to other programs, including those having a four-year curriculum.

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